

Once more: what has happened to the #MeToo witch-hunt?

By David Walsh
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We have asked before, and we ask again: what has happened to the #MeToo campaign?

From October 2017 onward, through at least the first few months of 2020, the American media was alive—and one might say aglow—with lurid allegations of sexual misconduct directed against prominent figures in the arts and elsewhere. The savage witch-hunt made victims of such figures as Kevin Spacey, James Levine, Louis C.K., Charles Dutoit, Garrison Keillor, Jeffrey Tambor, Plácido Domingo and numerous others.

On the basis of generally unsubstantiated claims, careers and lives were destroyed. None of the above figures has been convicted of a single crime, and only Spacey was charged with one (the Massachusetts case pathetically fell apart). The *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and the *New Yorker* and *New York* magazines regularly and gleefully participated in the evisceration of various personalities on the basis of shabby evidence, or no evidence at all. *Time* magazine bestowed its “Person of the Year” honor for 2017 on the “Silence Breakers.”

How and why did sexual misconduct in Hollywood in particular, one of the great social issues of our time, according to the media in 2017, 2018 and 2019, suddenly vanish from sight? Why has the “MeToo” fever suddenly broken?

First of all, its disappearance, temporary or otherwise, points to the highly manipulated character of such efforts. With great fanfare, the US media turns on a given tap at one instant, only to turn it off at the next. Everything is dictated by the needs of the ruling elite to shift public opinion in this direction or that, always with a larger political agenda in mind, above all, to confuse and deceive the people.

One of the primary roles of the press remains, in Lenin’s words, “to shout down the truth, to prevent it from being heard, to drown it in a torrent of invective and shouts, to prevent an earnest elucidation of the facts.” When the *New York Times*, effortlessly changing the subject, replaces its “Sex, Sex, Sex!” headlines with ones devoted almost exclusively to “Race, Race, Race!” and “Russia, Russia,

Russia!” it can count on broad sections of the affluent middle class to be swept along.

In October 2017 and since, very few voices, aside from the WWSW, have pointed out that historically the “sex scandal,” as a technique by which to settle scores and regulate public affairs, has *almost invariably* been associated with the activity of reactionary elements determined to pollute the political atmosphere and push it to the right.

The #MeToo operation used intensely emotive language regarding very intimate issues and appealed to the public’s natural revulsion at the thought of sexual abuse and the victimization of vulnerable individuals. The sexual wrongdoing outcry was one of the means, along with the anti-Russia hysteria, of retaining a primarily upper middle class constituency, and whomever else could be persuaded to go along with it, within the Democratic Party’s orbit.

In regard to the so-called “rape culture,” the Democrats painted themselves as “progressives” who “defended women” against the abusers. There was much that was murky and dubious about the sordid claims, transmitted instantly by the *Times* and the rest or, worse still, made the subject of pseudo-in-depth features remarkably short on names and facts—but that there was a general attempt to obscure or diminish the burning questions of social inequality and class, along with the deteriorating conditions in which tens of millions were living, while playing up the supposedly universal and timeless struggle between “powerless” women and “powerful” men, was unmistakable.

The sexual misconduct campaign became an extension, by other means, of Democrat Hillary Clinton’s wretched 2016 presidential campaign, which was saturated with anti-working class identity politics, including the demonizing of the unfortunate 18-year-old Stanford University student Brock Turner.

In addition, of course, such operations also have the practical effect, from the point of view of their proponents, of seeing males ousted from top positions in the media, entertainment industry and academic world, to be replaced

by females. This is part of the internecine gender warfare going on in such professional spheres, which does not have the slightest positive result for working class women.

Once former Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was convicted and brutally sentenced in mid-March, the #MeToo campaign was effectively put away in a closet. As we argued in July, one of the principal factors dictating this change in tactics and tone was no doubt the 2020 electoral project of the Democratic Party and Joe Biden's prospects in particular. In a March 25 radio interview, former Biden staffer Tara Reade claimed that the then-senator from Delaware had groped her in 1993. The charges were received coolly, even skeptically, by the *New York Times* and the media generally. The watchword "believe women" in this case obviously and dangerously cut across the plans and politics of the *New York Times* and the Democrats.

In mid-May, the *Times* gave the official signal that the campaign was no longer a fully approved concern by criticizing the *New Yorker's* Ronan Farrow, one of the #MeToo heroes for his initial "expose" of Weinstein in October 2017. Although the *Times* used relatively restrained language, its article, in effect, as the WSWS noted, implied that Farrow was a dishonest fraud. And where has Farrow disappeared to?

Also hovering over events are the continued fallout and lingering effects of the seriously under-reported Jeffrey Epstein scandal. Epstein, the disgraced financier who was "suicided" in August 2019, had connections to many influential figures in the US and beyond. The case of an individual who appears to have been the whoremaster to the super-rich represents a continuing threat to important personages, no doubt including some in the upper echelons of the American media. All the more reason to rein in the wilder sex allegations. This helps explain, for example, why unstable #MeToo activist Rose McGowan, once the toast of the town for her "bravery," has largely lost access to the "respectable" media for the time being.

Since March, leading #MeToo feminists have twisted themselves in knots seeking to justify their support for Biden in the light of Reade's allegations. To make clear: they are not in a quandary because they find themselves endorsing a veteran servant of big business, a rotten wheeler-dealer who once allied himself in the Senate with ultra-reactionary segregationists such as James Eastland of Mississippi and Herman Talmadge of Georgia, a pro-corporate warmonger with the blood of countless thousands in Libya, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan on his hands ... no, such concerns do not trouble these well-to-do types.

Rather, they find Biden objectionable and their position disquieting because the former vice president, as Rebecca

Traister *New York* magazine's *The Cut* phrased it in A ("The Biden Trap") is "an accused harasser who's now been credibly accused of assault." In August, as Biden's nomination drew near, Traister referred to him ("Biden's Fantasy of Female Submission"), as someone who "has made multiple women uncomfortable with his habit of nonconsensual touching." That Biden would continue the massive crimes of American capitalism at home and abroad is not an issue that would occur to Traister and her ilk.

For her part, Jessica Valenti at *Medium* was only worried in early August about the "scrutiny" any female vice presidential candidate selected by Biden would have to undergo. "It's bad enough," Valenti commented, "that there's another old white man representing Democrats in the presidential election, but now we have to watch again as smart, capable women are nitpicked over and dismissed—another reminder of just how misogynist this country is." Valenti, of course, was including Biden's eventual choice, right-wing, law-and-order former prosecutor Kamala Harris, in that grouping of "smart, capable women."

These people are a thousand miles from the needs and problems of the working class, male and female, white, black and immigrant. Or, rather, their allegiance to the Democratic Party, obsession with their own advancement and privileges and attachment to the stock market and the entire parasitic American capitalist economy inevitably renders them ever more hostile to the mass of the population as it enters into opposition with the entire political establishment.

As for those who consider themselves on the left who supported the #MeToo fraud, they should give themselves a swift kick in their own asses and ask why they were so easily manipulated and swept along by this shameful and destructive witch-hunt.

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